

## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA MCHS PROGRAM PROFILE<sup>1</sup>

As previously described in the Accelerating Student Success Through Credit-Based Transition Programs September 2004 site profiles,<sup>2</sup> the CBTP in California is composed of a partnership between Southern California MCHS and California Community College. In general, MCHSs focus on providing at-risk students with academic and social preparation for college and tend to be characterized by small class sizes, support services, and close teacher-student interaction.<sup>3</sup> Southern California MCHS is located on the campus of its postsecondary partner, California Community College, which is situated off a major street in a residential and commercial area of Los Angeles.

The California Community College campus consists of four modern buildings.<sup>4</sup> In the fall of 2003, the college had an enrollment of 7,000 students. Of these, 68 percent were African-American and 28 percent were Hispanic. The college is currently suffering from a lack of space. As of our fall 2004 visit, it was unclear as to whether or not there would continue to be room on campus for the MCHS after the 2004–05 school year.

The MCHS has been in existence since 1989. In the 2003–04 school year, enrollment totaled approximately 330 students, with 45 percent African-American and 55 percent Hispanic students. The MCHS is housed on a separate section of the campus and the facilities consist of 12 small modular buildings. There is no indoor area where the student body and staff can meet; instead a courtyard nearby serves as the central meeting location. One building is designated as the main office and also houses the principal's office.

Classes run from 8 a.m. until 3:10 p.m. and the school operates on a modified block schedule. There are six alternating 70-minute periods taught Monday through Thursday, with all classes meeting on Fridays for shorter periods that range from 50 to 60 minutes. On Monday and Wednesday the schedule consists of periods 1, 3, and 5, with 2, 4, and 6 scheduled on Tuesday and Thursday. There are 13 teachers, a program coordinator who is a teacher on special assignment, a counselor, and a principal on staff. During the 2003–04 school year, there was also an assistant principal for counseling; however, this individual resigned and as of our fall 2004 site visit the position was unfilled. The administrative team consists of the principal, the program coordinator, and (when the

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<sup>1</sup> In order to give the study participants anonymity, the specific research sites were given pseudonyms. However, the name of the general program is used in some cases.

<sup>2</sup> Please see the Accelerating Student Success Through Credit-Based Transition Programs study's Web page on the U.S. Department of Education's Web site to download and view two-page profiles of each of the study's five case sites at: [www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/cclo/cbtrans/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/cclo/cbtrans/index.html).

<sup>3</sup> Please also see on the study Web page, listed above, the program description for more information on the MCHS program model.

<sup>4</sup> This descriptive information is provided so the reader has a better understanding of the program environment.

position is occupied) the assistant principal for counseling.

## **Student Outreach**

The outreach process employed by the MCHS is multifaceted. The first step is mailing the application to all the public middle schools in the district. Applications also are sent to the private and parochial schools in the surrounding community, along with a letter providing information on the school. In addition, during the 2003–04 school year the principal presented the program at the district’s principals’ meeting and shared the application with those in attendance. The MCHS also has a good reputation with parents of its alumni, and many people within the community inquire about attending the school based on word of mouth recommendations.

In the past, the MCHS counseling staff have visited local feeder schools and met with the counselors at those sites to identify students that would benefit from the MCHS experience.

## **MCHS Application Process**

Student applicants to the MCHS are screened and then selected based upon a process that examines four components: letters of recommendation, writing samples, grade-point-average (GPA), and scores on the California Achievement Test, Sixth Edition (CAT/6). The students complete the first two components and the school requests student records to examine CAT scores and past academic performance.

A weighted rubric is used to score each component of the application, and scores for

all components are totaled and grouped into ranges (e.g., applications with scores in the 600s are put together, and those in the 500s are put together); a perfect score is 700. Each student’s application package is carefully screened to ensure that students selected can develop the social and academic skills needed to attend college by 11th grade. Due to the open campus environment and the scholastic freedom that students experience by being able to take courses at the community college, only students that can exhibit the maturity to manage their actions are accepted into the school.

The principal selects the final 100 students to enter the ninth grade from the applications received.

## **School Orientation Process**

In August, ninth graders and other new students participate in an orientation held at the community college’s theater and coordinated by the high school staff and administration. Parents are invited, and often attend the orientation. The purpose of the orientation is to provide students and parents with information about the MCHS and highlight information contained within the student handbook, including expectations, dress code, and conduct. General information regarding dual enrollment and college matriculation opportunities and procedures at MCHS also are discussed during the half-day orientation.

## **Precollege Curriculum and Program**

The ninth and 10th grades provide an opportunity for students to prepare academically to start college courses in 11th grade. To prepare students, teachers at the

MCHS use standards-based instruction to establish an academically rigorous environment. While incorporating both content and performance standards into the curriculum, teachers also differentiate instruction, so that weaknesses are being addressed and strengthened.

Exhibit A-1 below outlines the district's requirements for graduation. Students in the ninth and 10th grades take academic courses that meet these requirements and prepare them for college-level work. In addition to

mathematics, English, world history, science, technology and the arts, ninth grade students take a life skills course that provides them with academic and career guidance. Also, in order to facilitate the many steps to college enrollment, all ninth graders take the college placement exams at the college's Assessment Center.

MCHS freshmen and sophomores begin to experience a college environment by attending career fairs and college fairs, among other activities, at the community college. The

### Exhibit A-1: Southern California Middle College High School District Graduation Requirements

Subject	Credits	Requirements
English <sup>a</sup>	40 credits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English 9</li> <li>English 10</li> <li>American Literature or Contemporary Compositions</li> <li>12th-grade composition</li> </ul>
Social Science	30 credits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>World history</li> <li>U.S. history</li> <li>Principles of American Democracy and Economics</li> </ul>
Mathematics	20 credits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>College preparatory mathematics</li> </ul>
Lab Science	20 credits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 credits, biological science</li> <li>10 credits, physical science</li> </ul>
Visual and Performance Arts	10 credits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two semesters of arts classes</li> </ul>
Applied Technology	10 credits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two semesters of technology classes</li> </ul>
Health	5 credits	
Life Skills	5 credits	
Physical Education (PE)	20 credits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Four semesters of PE, team sports, or dance</li> </ul>
Electives	70 credits	
Total	230 credits	

<sup>a</sup> Each high school course is worth 10 credits, 5 per semester.

MCHS curriculum also provides students with opportunities to familiarize themselves with college facilities. For example, the 10th-grade English teacher takes students to the college's library and, while exposing them to the college setting, also works with them on research and writing skills. The research and writing components are an essential piece of the 10th-grade English curriculum, because if students are going to be successful at the college they need to be able to complete the many writing assignments encountered in college courses.

### **College Course Selection and Enrollment Process**

Through an agreement between the school district and the college district, students at the MCHS can take courses at the community college to satisfy either high school electives or requirements. The school district has identified college courses that may be used towards high school graduation. For example, the College's American history course fulfills the high school graduation requirement in U.S. history.

To choose and prepare for enrollment in college courses, students meet one-on-one with the counselor at the MCHS and frequently with college counselors as well. Usually starting in the 11th grade, the counselors help to map out a schedule that allows students to take college courses to meet some of their requirements. While most students at MCHS begin taking college-level courses in the 11th grade, exceptions are made for ninth and 10th- grade students that exhibit the maturity and academic ability to enter the college environment.

The California Community College district has established procedures for all public school students who wish to enroll in college courses. In addition to completing the regular college application, students submit an additional application form that is signed by their parents and their principal, for each course they wish to take. California Community College reviews this form along with any previous course work completed at the college. While non-MCHS students must be interviewed by college officials in order to be approved for admission, the college omits this step for MCHS students, trusting that the high school has sufficiently screened them. In addition to completing the application forms, students must pass the college placement exams in mathematics and language arts prior to enrolling in credit-bearing courses. These procedures have been established to ensure that students are successful in their college course work.

### **College Course Curriculum and Credit-Earning Process**

All dual credit courses are regular college courses taught at the community college by college professors. The MCHS students usually comprise a small number of the students in these courses; therefore no adjustments are made to the curriculum or the textbooks. Exhibit A-2 illustrates how the courses offered at the high school and at the college are integrated to develop individualized student schedules.

#### *Award of Credit for Courses*

Units earned at the community college are doubled when applied towards meeting high school requirements. Therefore, a one-

## Exhibit A-2: Southern California Middle College High School–Sample Schedule for 11th-Grade Students

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00 – 9:25 a.m.	History 11 <sup>a</sup> – Political and Social History of the United States	Algebra	History 11– Political and Social History of the United States	Algebra	8:00 – 8:50 a.m. Period 1 Power Reading  8:55 – 9:45 a.m. Period 2 Algebra
9:55 – 10:15 a.m.	Homeroom				9:50 – 10:15 a.m.
10:40 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	Contemporary Composition	Chemistry	Contemporary Composition	Chemistry	10:35 – 11:25 a.m. Period 3 Composition  11:30 – 12:30 p.m. Period 4 Chemistry
12:30 – 1:10 p.m.	Lunch				
1:15 – 3:10 p.m.	Spanish 2	Theater 100 <sup>b</sup> – Introduction to Theater	Spanish 2	Theater 100 – Introduction to Theater	1:15 – 2:10 p.m. Period 5 Spanish 2  2:15 – 3:10 p.m. Period 6 Power Reading

<sup>a</sup> History 11 is a college course taught at the community college.

<sup>b</sup> Theater 100 is a college course taught at the community college.

semester three-unit community college course is valued at six high school credits.

**At the college.** Students are awarded credit upon completion of a course, and credits are reflected on their college transcript.

**At the high school.** After completing college courses, the students take their college transcripts to their high school counselor, who

enters the courses on the high school transcript. Only college classes that count towards high school requirements are factored as part of the student's GPA.

### Support Services

Numerous supports are provided to students either through the MCHS staff or through the three main counseling centers at the California Community College. These three

centers, each of which has its own facilities and staff, focus on the areas of assessment, careers, and transfer. MCHS students enrolled in college courses have access to the college services because of their official status as college students; however, even MCHS students not enrolled in college courses are welcomed by the centers' staffs.

**Academic Counseling.** The MCHS counselor meets with all students to ensure that they have the classes they need to graduate from high school. The counselor usually does six graduation checks, meeting one-on-one with students to review courses taken and courses needed for graduation. A critical check occurs in the junior year, when letters are sent at the end of the semester listing the classes students still need to take to meet their high school graduation requirements.

To ensure that students enrolled in college courses are provided the academic supports they need to succeed, the high school conducts a 10-week or midsemester review. Students enrolled in college courses must provide a progress report from the college to the high school. The counselor reviews this report to determine if there is a problem and what supports are needed in order for the student to successfully complete the course.

**Academic Tutoring.** Since most college courses do not meet on Friday, the school provides extra support during that time period to those students taking college courses. While the title of the course, Power Reading, does not always reflect the activities taking place, it provides students an

opportunity to complete their college assignments in an environment supervised by a MCHS teacher. The teacher monitors students' progress and determines if any interventions are necessary. High school students enrolled in college courses also have access to college tutoring services.

**Career Awareness.** Students are exposed to different career options through both the high school and college counselors. The MCHS counseling office is in the process of implementing a computer-based career assessment tool. At the college's career center, MCHS students can speak to counselors and attend workshops on resumé writing, or participate in special industry-themed seminars, such as a semester-long seminar presented in the spring of 2004 by real estate professionals.

To ensure that MCHS students are aware of the career center and its services, all ninth-graders are provided with a tour of the center.

**College Awareness.** Because MCHS students enroll in California Community College courses and have full access to the college campus and college services, college awareness is a daily activity. To further promote a college-going culture, the high school sponsors or collaborates with the community college on field trips to other college campuses and college fairs. The high school counselor also coordinates in-class presentations by college speakers. In addition, counselors from the different college counseling centers make presentations to MCHS classes to encourage students in their college aspirations.



The required ninth grade life skills class focuses on steps that students must take to prepare for and enter college. Themes explored include the high school courses needed to enter college, the range of college options available to students, the college application process, and the federal, state, and private financial aid application processes.

**College Transition.** Since the MCHS is a small school, with 64 seniors in the 2003–04 school year, the counselor works with each one to ensure that all students continue in college after high school graduation.

The college's transfer center holds presentations, open to MCHS students, for students at California Community College who wish to transfer to a baccalaureate-granting institution. The transfer center also works with students individually to help them transfer any credits earned at California Community College to other colleges.

The MCHS provides individual counseling for financial aid, as well as workshops on applying for state and federal aid. The counselor uses homeroom time to speak with the students about upcoming application deadlines and to encourage them to apply for both college and financial aid. College counseling staff also assist in these efforts.

### **Professional Development**

While regular professional development is provided through the school district, most teachers also participate in targeted professional development that is encouraged by the principal. For example, the school started implementing the Advancement via

Individual Determination (AVID) program in the fall of 2004. In preparation, several staff members attended an AVID summer training institute. AVID promotes the college-going theme across the curriculum by incorporating specific techniques such as writing, critical reading, and inquiry through group or research projects. As another example, a new science teacher attended a conference on watershed education and subsequently participated in a collaborative program between the school district and city environmental officials.

### **Funding**

**Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) and Average Daily Attendance (ADA).** California state policy stipulates that public school students enrolled in college courses are counted in the same way as matriculated college students for funding purposes. As such, the community college receives FTE funding for all MCHS students enrolled in college credit courses. However, the state limits students to taking no more than 11 units per semester. The school district also receives funding provided the students are enrolled in high school for a minimum of four hours per day.

**Fees and Textbooks.** The California Community College district waives tuition for public school students enrolled in college courses, provided they enroll for no more than 11 units per semester. The school district, on the other hand, pays the cost of college textbooks. In order to decrease program costs, an agreement among the

MCHS, the community college and the school district allows the district to receive credits for returned books. During the buy-back period, students return books to the MCHS, it returns the books to the community college, and the college issues a credit to the district.

### Exhibit A-3: Southern California Middle College High School Outcomes, 2003–04

Student Outcomes <sup>a</sup>	
■	The total enrollment at the middle college was 304 students, with 72 percent eligible for the National School Lunch Program’s free or reduced price lunches.
■	The senior class included 64 students. Sixty-three (98 percent) graduated from the school.
■	During the fall of 2003, 150 students were enrolled in college courses at the community college. Of those, 142 completed their courses with a grade of C or better.
■	During the spring of 2004, 175 students were enrolled in college courses at the community college. Of those, 162 completed their courses with a grade of C or better.
■	The total number of credits earned by California MCHS students was 545 in the fall of 2003 and 735 in the spring of 2004.
■	Students enrolled in college courses in the fall of 2003 earned, on average, 3.6 credits. Those enrolled in the spring of 2004 earned, on average, 4.2 credits.
■	Fifty-six of the 63 seniors that graduated during the 2003–04 school year plan to attend college. Twelve of the graduates plan to attend California Community College, the postsecondary partner of Southern California MCHS.

<sup>a</sup> All data come from school staff and were not externally validated.